

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

NOVEMBER 8, 2015 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART





Photo by William Hartounian

PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

David Hardy, cellist

Lisa Emenheiser, pianist

Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

Sonata in C Major for Cello and Piano, op. 65 (1961)

Dialogo

Scherzo-pizzicato

Elegia

Marcia

Moto perpetuo

Intermission

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873 - 1943)

Sonata in G Minor for Cello and Piano, op. 19 (1901)

Lento; Allegro moderato

Allegro scherzando

Andante

Allegro mosso

The Musicians

David Hardy, principal cellist of the National Symphony Orchestra, achieved international recognition in 1982 as the top American prizewinner at the Seventh International Tchaikovsky Cello Competition in Moscow. Hardy won a special prize for the best performance of the *Suite for Solo Cello* by Victoria Yagling, commissioned for the competition.

Hardy made his solo debut with the National Symphony Orchestra in 1986, with Mstislav Rostropovich conducting. As a regular soloist with the orchestra, he gave the world premiere performance of Stephen Jaffe's *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* in 2004, with Leonard Slatkin conducting. In 2008, Bridge Records released the premiere recording of the concerto with Hardy and the Odense Symphony of Denmark. The National Symphony Orchestra's recording of John Corigliano's *Symphony no. 1*, featuring Hardy's solo cello performance, won the 1996 Grammy Award for "Best Classical Album."

Hardy is a founding member of the Kennedy Center Chamber Players and has appeared with this ensemble before enthusiastic audiences in the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater since 2003. Hardy's many chamber music performances include regular appearances at the Strings Music Festival in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and The Halcyon Music Festival in New Hampshire. He is a founding member of the Opus 3 Trio, with violinist Charles Wetherbee and pianist Lisa Emenheiser. The Opus 3 Trio has performed to critical acclaim across the country and has commissioned, premiered, and recorded many new works. Additionally, Hardy was cellist of the 20th Century Consort in Washington, DC, where he premiered works by Stephen Albert and Nicholas Maw. In addition to his performing schedule, Hardy teaches at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland.

Lisa Emenheiser, pianist, is one of Washington, DC's most respected performing artists and has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra for twenty-five years. A graduate of the Juilliard School, where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music, she has performed at Alice Tully Hall, Avery Fischer Hall, and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York, and at the National Gallery of Art, the Phillips Collection, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Kennedy Center in Washington. Emenheiser has appeared as soloist with renowned orchestras and was one of the featured soloists at the Kennedy Center's Piano 2000 Festival. She was also a soloist for the Kennedy Center's Journey to America Festival, and the National Symphony's Composer Portrait: Mozart. She has performed under the world's leading conductors — maestros Eschenbach, Rostropovich, Solti, and Slatkin. An established international chamber musician, she also has performed with some of the world's finest soloists, including Philippe Quint, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Julius Baker, Eugenia Zukerman, Ransom Wilson, and Jean-Pierre Rampal.

Emenheiser is an avid performer of contemporary music. She is pianist for the 21st Century Consort in Washington, DC, where she has premiered works by Stephen Albert, Nicholas Maw, Eugene O'Brien, David Froom, and Donald Crockett. She is a founding member of Opus 3 Trio, along with violinist Charles Wetherbee and cellist David Hardy. Additionally, Emenheiser was featured on national television as an expert artist commentator and performer in the PBS documentary *Exploring Your Brain*, in which she performed Ginastera's *Piano Sonata no. 1* and discussed the topic of memory with Garrick Utley.

Program Notes

It has been said that Britten's purely instrumental music suffers in comparison to his remarkable stage works — that, while ingenious in craft, the instrumental works lack both inspiration and expressive sweep. Britten himself seems to have succumbed to such criticism during the mid-1940s and early 1950s, immediately after the widespread success of *Peter Grimes* (1944–1945) and his first few chamber operas. Ultimately, it was the composer's friendship with Mstislav Rostropovich that compelled him to reenter the realm of instrumental composition with a series of works written especially for the Soviet cellist. The *Sonata for Cello and Piano* is the first of several works Britten wrote with Rostropovich in mind. In its five short movements, Britten finds an effective way to couple the venerable tradition of classical form, the exploration of which he had seemingly abandoned after the 1930s, and his own naturally narrative voice; here, dramatic description and purely musical device reign hand in hand.

Britten follows a four-movement classical sonata blueprint quite closely, and the simple insertion of an “extra” movement (the Marcia) should not distract the listener from his otherwise formal approach. Britten describes the work as being “in C”; while this is apt enough, the work is unmistakably marked by the composer's usual chromatic excursions and sharp tonal deflections.

Britten reveals his most intimate musical voice at the opening of the Dialogo movement. The cello offers gently fractured musings on a series of whole-step and half-step gestures, while the piano fills the rhythmic spaces left open by the cello with sonorous, rising parallel thirds. Almost all the basic material of the entire sonata derives from this seemingly unpretentious passage. After the central development section, the meter shifts to 4/4 as the cello takes over the scalar-motion motivic material of the piano's opening. Intermittent pedal tones on C crop up to herald a recapitulation. The piano scales, now spread throughout the upper register, and glistening cello harmonics, bring the movement to a quiet close.

The character of the second movement, Scherzo-pizzicato, is just as the title indicates: a recasting of the basic intervallic substance from the first movement into a rapid-fire scherzo, during which the cellist never makes use of the bow. Not surprisingly, a percussive quality is prominent throughout. The parallel thirds return, now chromatically modified, to form the oscillating piano backdrop of the Elegia, while the grotesquely bitonal Marcia takes off on scalar motives that employ the same alternating half steps and whole steps first heard in the opening of the Dialogo. The Moto perpetuo finale is cast in a kind of abstract rondo form whose saltando cello articulations are chased around a chromatic wilderness by the piano until, at last, C major appears as if in benediction.

The common wisdom on Rachmaninov's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* is that it is really a piano sonata with cello accompaniment. While this assessment may be a slight exaggeration, it cannot be denied that the piano is the dominant instrument in the work. The composer dedicated this sonata to his dear friend, cellist Anatoly Brandukov. They gave the premiere performance together in Moscow in November 1901. Set in four movements, the sonata is filled with the Russian romantic character that imbues Rachmaninov's beloved piano concertos. This would turn out to be the composer's last chamber music composition, as the remainder of his career was focused on solo piano and larger-scale orchestral and choral pieces.

A slow introduction opens the first movement, marked *Lento*; *Allegro moderato*. The tempo picks up and the cello presents a passionate, beautiful theme. A slower, somewhat more wistful melody follows, after which comes the stormy development section. The reprise ensues and the movement ends in typical Rachmaninovian fashion: the tempo speeds up as thematic morsels appear in a race to the finish, the piano crowning the coda with three resolute chords. In the second movement, marked *Allegro scherzando*, the cello presents a rhythmic idea in the opening moments of marginal interest. Two other themes are also presented, the latter of which is quite beautiful and recalls the mood of much of the slow music in the second and third *Piano Concertos*, especially in the piano writing.

The third movement, marked *Andante*, begins on the piano with a lovely theme of intimate and passionate character. After the cello enters, the material expands much the way the melody does in the second movement of the second *Piano Concerto*. A powerful climax is reached, and the third movement ends softly.

The finale starts off with a robust theme on the cello that rather lacks the individual stamp of the composer. Still, the music is bright and vivacious and has strong appeal. There follows a second subject more in the Rachmaninovian vein, full of passion and beauty and seeming to soar to the heavens. The two themes reappear throughout, the composer deftly manipulating their interplay. In the beginning of the coda, the cello recalls the piano's opening (six-note) theme from the first movement, and then the work ends brilliantly.

*Program Notes taken from descriptions on allmusic.com by
James Manheim and Robert Cummings.*

Upcoming events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

United States Army Chorus
Songs of the Soldier: A Salute to Veterans
Veteran's Day concert
November 11, Wednesday, 12:10
West Building, West Garden Court

National Gallery of Art Wind Quintet
Music by French composers
Presented in honor of
Louise Bourgeois: No Exit.
November 15, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

National Gallery of Art
New Music Ensemble
Music by Morton Subotnick
Presented in honor of
The Serial Impulse at Gemini G.E.L.
November 22, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

National Gallery of Art Orchestra
Gillian Anderson, guest conductor
Ciné-concert featuring *Way Down East*
Copresented with the Department of Film
November 29, Sunday, 2:00
East Building Auditorium

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